

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-14 EUR-10 SPC-01 PM-03 L-02 INR-10

PRS-01 MC-02 DRC-01 RSC-01 /056 W

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R 232203Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7862

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 8573

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EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PFOR, PE, UR, US

SUBJECT: PURCHASES OF SOVIET ARMS BY GOP

1. IT IS BECOMING MORE CERTAIN THAT THE GOP HAS PURCHASED SOVIET TANKS AND PERHPAS ARTILLERY. WHEN I SAW MINISTER OF FINANCE MORALES BERMUDEZ TODAY REGARDING BID HOUSING LOAN EXTENSION, HE MADE REFERENCE TO POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SEEMINGLY UNIMPORTANT ACTS OR EVENTS, IN THIS CASE TALK OF USG OPPOSITION TO EXTENSION OF LOAN, I TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO MENTION "RUMORS" OF GOP PURCHASE AND ARRIVAL HERE OF SOVIET TANKS AND OTHER ARMS SUGGESTING THAT THIS WAS ALSO RELATIVELY MINOR EVENT, IN ITS SUBSTANCE, BUT COULD HAVE MAJOR POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE. I SAID "RUMORS" WERE SO NUMEROUS AND FROM SUCH GOOD SOURCES THAT WE COULD ONLY ASSUME THEY REFLECTED SOME TRUTH. THE MINISTER SAID FACT THAT PERU HAD BEEN DENIED ACCESS TO US ARMS FOR LENGTHY PERIODS MADE IT LOGICAL THAT THEY PRUCHASE FROM OTHER SOURCES SUCH AS FRENCH, BRITISH AND EVEN USSR. HE WENT ON TO SAY, WITHOUT ADMITTING TO PURCHASE OF SPECIFIC ITEMS, THAT RECENT PURCHASES OF AIRCRAFT AND OTHER MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM US "AMOUNTED TO MUCH MORE THAN PURCHASES FROM USSR."

2. COMMENT: SOONER OR LATER PURCHASE OF SOVIET ARMS WILL
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BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE. I TRUST THAT WHEN THIS NEWS REACHES

US PRESS AND CONGRESS, NOT TO MENTION CERTAIN OTHER AGENCIES OF USG, WE WILL ATTEMPT PUT THIS IN PERSPECTIVE. I DO NOT MEAN TO UNDERESTIMATE POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS OR POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SUCH PURCHASES, BOTH WITH RESPECT TO NEIGHBORS AND IN THE OAS IN GENERAL, NOT TO MENTION IN US. OUR REACTION, HOWEVER, SHOULD BE ONE WHICH WILL ATTEMPT TO MINIMIZE THE DAMAGE DONE AND WE SHOULD NOT BE TEMPTED TO ACTS WHICH WOULD ONLY SERVE TO PUSH THIS REGIME TO EVEN GREATER DEPENDENCE ON EAST EUROPE OR USSR FOR ARMS SUPPLIES. I IMAGINE SOME OF PERU'S SISTER REPUBLICS MIGHT WELL BE OUT IN FRONT IN THEIR REACTIONS AND WHILE I DO NOT SUGGEST WE REMAIN SILENT, I DO SUGGEST WE RETAIN ALL OUR OPTIONS AND CONTINUE WHERE POSSIBLE TO BE PERU'S SOURCE OF SUPPLY FOR ARMS.

3. WE ARE CONSIDERING POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION DESIGNED TO DISSUADE THE GOP FROM ANY FURTHER PURCHASES FROM THE USSR AND WILL BE MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS EARLY NEXT WEEK.
BELCHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMS, MILITARY PROCUREMENT, MILITARY AIRCRAFT, TANKS (COMBAT VEHICLES), ARMS SHIPMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973LIMA08573
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LIMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731117/aaaaambb.tel
Line Count: 79
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24-Jan-2002 by martinjw>; APPROVED <13 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PURCHASES OF SOVIET ARMS BY GOP
TAGS: MASS, PFOR, PE, UR, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005